

"The Men Who Make Our Novels"

By SOPHIE KERR.

THIS is, I believe, one of a series of informative volumes on our contemporary authors, intended primarily for the writers of club papers and the classes in journalism without which no college of to-day is complete. Also for the many people who read books and say, "Well, I wish to goodness I knew something about

the clever fellow who wrote this, but I suppose there'll be little or nothing published about him until he's dead."

No matter for whom it is intended, Mr. Gordon's book is thoroughly interesting and workmanlike, without pretence or self-consciousness, and entirely lacking in what is popularly called "flub." Some of the authors tell their own stories with

happy results—witness what Joseph Hergesheimer says about himself, and that most engaging last paragraph in Rupert Hughes's autobiography. Again, the author quotes the opinions of authorities, refraining from much comment of his own. In each instance, however, he manages to give a short definite story of the man and his work and at the end of each chapter is a list of the author's books handy reference.

Mr. Gordon begins his book fittingly enough with William Dean Howells, and follows him with Booth Tarkington, who here stands revealed as having dropped one of his names—to wit, his first, which is Newton. It isn't surprising that he dropped it—it's a lot pleasanter to think of Booth Tarkington than of Newton B. Tarkington. That last is too reminiscent of a certain member of the Administration—but there, even though I am a Republican, this is not the place to speak of politics.

Trailing Mr. Tarkington comes William Allen White, who is said to have a fondness for making salads—I hope Mrs. White has an amiable cook who doesn't mind members of the family messing round the kitchen. Then come Ernest Poole, Joseph Hergesheimer, Rupert Hughes, Winston Churchill, Theodore Dreiser, Meredith Nicholson, Samuel Hopkins Adams—described as a "blond of the extremely clear-skinned type." Nothing is said of Mr. Adams's favorite dressing gown in which he is habitually photographed. It seems an unkind omission.

After the blond Mr. Adams, come Hazlin Garland and Stewart Edward White, and personally I am with Mr. Gordon when he tells of the avidity with which he reads Mr. White's books. Think about *The Blazed Trail* and *Simba*.

Next come Samuel Merwin, Allan Updegraff, Rex Beach, with an unsuspected middle name as surprising as Mr. Tarkington's forgotten first, Upton Sinclair, Henry Blake Fuller, James Branch Cabell, Robert W. Chambers, Edward Lucas White,—and oh, a lot of others. I wish there might have been more about Henry Kitchell Webster, who is much more important than others to whom larger space is devoted, but he was out of the country when Mr. Gordon was writing this book, and printing presses wait not on foreign mail.

Robert Herrick's rather snifty attitude toward magazine fiction will make a good many people grin, and Harry Leon Wilson's description of his son and heir will make a good many more people grin, and a great deal more pleasantly. Other people, possibly even the same ones, will read of George Barr McCutcheon's stage experience with a lot of sympathy for the strange ambitions of youth.

Indeed, one of the pleasantest things about this book is its bits of droll human nature cropping out through the dates and other facts—and some of it belongs to the men he is writing about, and some of it is Mr. Gordon's own. Let me record, however, that the author does not press his opinions upon you, but in his very preface sounds his keynote of modesty. This, and his very clear and excellent style, his brevity, and his occasional levity, make Mr. Gordon's book a great deal more than a library of reference work.

And oh, yes, cheer up, ye waiting millions—he certainly *does* include a chapter on Harold Bell Wright!

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